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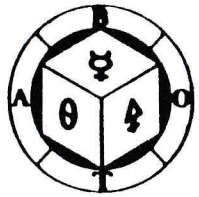
TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson No. 3



BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Three

THE LIFE-POWER

This week you color your first Tarot Key. You will find the coloring instructions at the end of this lesson. First, cut your Tarot Tableau apart. If you wish, you may mount each Key on a light cardboard with rubber cement. Mounting the Keys on heavy black paper gives a good frame. This helps to protect the edges of the Keys from becoming torn or frayed. Be careful not to get the rubber cement on the front of the picture. Should this occur, rub gently, and it will come off without damage to the design.

Place Key 0, The Fool, before you. Observe every detail closely, so that you can make mental reference to it as you read the lesson.

Follow an orderly procedure in your examination of the Key. Begin with the Hebrew letter Aleph, printed in the lower right-hand corner. Then consider the meaning of the title. Then look at the number and mentally review the meanings you learned from the preceding lesson.

After this, inspect the picture. Begin at the upper right-hand corner and work progressively through the design, from right to left and from top to bottom.

With a few exceptions, which will be noticed as they come up, the side of a Tarot Key on the observer's right corresponds to the direction South. The opposite side is North. The background is East. The foreground is West. Remember this, because it is an important clue to the exact meaning of many Tarot symbols.

The background, furthermore, usually contains details which refer to states or causes of manifestation which are thought of as **preceding** what is represented by the details in the foreground. The latter usually shows the special symbols which have immediate relation to the meanings of the letter, title and number of the Key. Details placed in the middle distance usually symbolize agencies intervening between what is suggested by the background and what is represented by the symbols in the foreground.

Key 0 represents the manner in which the Absolute presents itself to the minds of the wise. The Absolute is THAT concerning which nothing may be positively affirmed. We cannot define it because it transcends our comprehension.

We may **call** it the Rootless Root of all being, or the Causeless Cause of all that is, but these words, or any others we may employ, merely point our minds toward the Absolute without at all adding to our positive knowledge concerning it. To indulge in speculation as to its essential nature is futile. We shall be much better occupied if we consider the ways in which the Absolute manifests itself

Among names which have been given to this manifestation are: Life-power; the One Force; the One Thing; Limitless Light; L. V. X; the Primal Will. Learn these names. They designate the force you use in every thought, in every feeling, in every action. To enable you to gain a better practical understanding of the nature and possibilities of this force is the primary object of this instruction. Your advancement will be measured strictly by your growing comprehension of the real meaning of these terms.

The first symbol of the Life-power is 0. Review **now** the list of its meanings. Do so mentally if you can. If not, consult the list in Lesson 2. The Life-power is the NO-THING. It is **nothing** we can define, **nothing** we can measure. Yet it really **is,** and it is limitless.

0 looks like an egg, and an egg contains potencies of growth and development. As a living body is formed inside the shell of an egg and then hatched from it, so is everything in the universe brought into embodiment **within** the Cosmic Egg of the Life-power.

When this process of embodiment is perfected, and only then, it becomes possible to achieve the ultimate liberation, which is union with the Absolute itself. But this attainment is far beyond our present objective which is to make the best possible use of the potencies of the Life-power **within** the limits of the "Ring Pass-Not" symbolized by the outline of the zero sign.

The Life-power has within it **all** possibilities. All manifestation, every object, every force in the universe, is an adaptation of the one Life-power. Because its possibilities are truly limitless, it may be specialized in any particular form of expression the human mind can clearly conceive. Many extraordinary results may be achieved by purely mental means.

Because the Life-power is the force behind growth and development, it is obviously the **cultural** power. This is intimated by the attribution of the letter Aleph to this Key.

Aleph means "bull" or "ox". Oxen were the motive-power in the early civilizations where the alphabet of occultism was invented. They were used to plow fields, to thresh grain, and to carry burdens. Agriculture is the basis of civilization, hence the ox represents the power at

work in every activity whereby man makes use of the forces surrounding him, and adapts them to the realization of his purposes.

Oxen themselves are symbols of the taming of natural forces. Every ox begins life as a bull. Thus the letter Aleph is a symbol of creative energy, and of the vital principles of living creatures. This vital principle comes to us in physical form as the radiant energy of the sun.

The Life-power, therefore, is not an abstraction far removed from our every day life. We make contact with it everywhere, in every form. Our senses reveal it to us physically as light and heat from the sun, and modern science has confirmed the truth of the ancient intuition that solar energy is the basis of physical existence.

Just as sunlight is a mode of electro-magnetic radiation, so is everything else composed of electro-magnetic vibrations. Man's instruments for recording these vibrations have a relatively narrow range, even though it does extend far beyond the limits of physical sensation. Yet there is an instrument **not** made by man which **does** register the higher vibrations of cosmic radiation, and by means of this instrument, those who know how to use it may become aware of, and utilize, the most potent forces in the universe.

This instrument is **human personality** which has possibilities far beyond what most persons realize. In order to make these possibilities actual human powers, the instrument must be rightly adjusted, and, in a sense, completed. For the untrained personality is like a delicate precision tool lacking the completion of some of its parts, and some of the higher functions of the human organism cannot be exercised until proper training has brought about actual alterations of its **structure.**

Yet we shall find, when we take up this work, that the whole power of the cosmos is with us in our efforts to reach the higher state of unfoldment. The primary function of human personality is to give free expression to the highest potencies of the Life-power. (Recall statements 0, 1 and 2 in The Pattern on the Trestleboard.)

A most important form taken by the radiant energy, and the first you should learn to use, is **air**. You must learn to control it by learning how to breathe. Just learn to take a really **deep** breath which fills your lungs, by giving free play to the abdominal muscles during the act of inhalation. Remember, you do not have to **pull in** the breath. Atmospheric pressure takes care of that. You simply have to expand your ribs and the air will rush into your lungs.

Do not make the mistake of trying any forcible expansion of the chest. Let the muscles just below the ribs do most of the work. If you do it properly, you will feel the expansion in the small of your back and at the sides, as well as in the front of the body.

Keep in mind the picture of the air penetrating into every part of the lungs so as to provide your blood stream with the oxygen it requires. At first it takes watchful attention to make breathing deep and regular. Consistent practice will establish you in good habits.

Make no particular effort to keep up the fullest deep breathing all day long. When you rise in the morning, take four deep breaths. Exhale as completely as you can manage without strain. Remember to exhale before taking the first of these four breaths.

During the day, repeat your four breaths at noon, just before the evening meal, and just before going to bed. The rest of the day you need only **determine** to get full value from the act of breathing. Your subconsciousness will attend automatically to the establishment of the proper rhythm. **Don't try any trick** exercises such as are given in some books purporting to teach the art of breathing for occult development. Most of these breathing stunts have no practical value. The few which are really useful are also dangerous unless practiced under the supervision of a skilled teacher competent to judge the condition of the pupil.

Listen to your breathing. It should be practically inaudible. If your breathing exercises are noisy, they are wrong. The remedy is to slow down the alternate expansion and contraction of the abdominal muscles.

Adhere strictly to the rule of observing four stated periods for taking the deepest possible breaths. Observe these religiously. The rest of the time, let your subconsciousness do the work. It will, if you make up its mind for it by your definite intention. If you are suddenly upset by something, stop for four deep breaths before you try to think, or say, or do anything whatever.

The importance of breath is shown in the symbolism of the Fool. In Hebrew esotericism, the letter Aleph is the special sign for air and for breath. The noun "fool", moreover, is derived from the Latin follis, meaning a "bag of wind", and to this day we call a noisy, silly person a "windbag".

Follis also means "bellows," an instrument which uses air to stir up a fire. This is precisely the office of our lungs.

The yellow tint in the background of the picture is used in the schools of the Western Tradition as a symbol for air. Add to this the fact that in almost every human tongue words which mean **air, wind** or **breath** are employed also to designate life and conscious energy. Then you will begin to understand better why occultism stresses the importance of beginning practical work by learning to breathe.

The Tarot title for the Life-power is highly ingenious. It tells us what we need to know, and at the same time throws the idly curious and the superficial dabblers off the track.

One clue to what Tarot means by "Fool" is the saying: "The wisdom of God is foolishness with men." Because this is true, the wise men of every generation, who gain unusual knowledge of the Life-power, are often called madmen or fools by their less enlightened brethren.

Thus the title of Key 0 hints at a state of consciousness which many materialistic psychologists term abnormal or even pathological, because they do not understand it. Those who do comprehend its significance call this state superconsciousness, or cosmic consciousness.

To enter into this state of consciousness is to arrive at a profound understanding of the cosmic order, and at the same time to become aware of the true significance of what it is to be a human being. This attainment may be regarded as being the ultimate objective of your Tarot study.

Do not look for miracles. Your study and practice will help you to organize the forces of your personality so that it will become an adequate instrument for the expression of superconsciousness and for the exercise of powers which belong to this high level of awareness.

The only way we can conceive of the Absolute is in terms of our own experience. We cannot help investing it with something of our own human characteristics. This is true of the highest philosophical ideas concerning a Creative Intelligence, just as certainly as it applies to the grossest types of anthropomorphism. Hence the Fool is a human figure.

Behind this personal semblance, however, sages discern something higher, pictured here as a white sun. Beyond the personal there is the impersonal, manifested as the limitless energy radiated to the planets of innumerable world systems from their sun.

In the process of manifestation, this energy (symbolized also by the fair hair of the traveler) is temporarily limited by living organisms. Of these, the vegetable kingdom, represented by the green wreath, is the primary class from which, in the order of evolution, spring animal organisms, typified by the red feather. The Life-power is forever young, forever in the morning of its might, forever on the verge of the abyss of manifestation. It always faces unknown possibilities of self-expression transcending any height it may have reached. Hence the Fool faces toward the North-West. This direction, according to the rituals of occult schools which dramatize the ancient mysteries in their ceremonies, is particularly associated with initiation and with the beginning of new enterprises. He looks toward a peak beyond and above his present situation.

He is THAT which was, is and shall be. This is indicated by the Hebrew letters יהוה, Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh shown dimly among the lines in the folds of the collar of his undergarment. For "That which was, is and shall be" is the precise meaning of Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh.

His inner robe stands for the dazzling white light of perfect wisdom. It is concealed by the black coat of ignorance, lined with the red of passion and of physical force. This outer garment is embroidered with a floral decoration; but the unit of design is a solar orb containing eight red spokes, and symbolizing the whirling motion which brings the universe into manifestation. The coat is encircled by a girdle consisting of twelve units of which seven are showing. The girdle symbolizes time, and just as the girdle must be removed before the coat may be taken off, so is it impossible to overcome ignorance and passion until man frees his consciousness from the limitations imposed on him by his belief in the reality of time. No single symbol in Tarot is more important than this.

What you should notice is that the girdle is artificial, made by man himself, and not a product of nature. This means that man's concept of time is an artificial product, a device of man's creative imagination. It is a most useful invention when rightly employed, but when it is abused, as it is by most persons, it becomes a prolific source of error.

The mountains in the background represent those abstract mathematical conceptions which are behind all knowledge of reality. These conceptions seem cold and uninteresting to many. Yet the melting ice and snow on the peaks feeds the streams which make fertile the valleys below. So will the principles of Ageless Wisdom feed your consciousness and make fertile your mental imagery, thus transforming your whole life.

The little dog represents intellect, the reasoning mind which functions at the personal level. In some of the older exoteric versions of Key 0, the dog bites the Fool's leg. When the Tarot Keys were first invented, the intellectual consciousness of humanity, distorted by centuries of wrong thinking, was actively inimical to spiritual truth, and did all it could to impede the progress of the human spirit toward a better knowledge of reality. In our version the dog is friendly to intimate that even the lower intellect of man has become the companion, rather than the adversary, of those who seek the higher knowledge. Today the human intellect goes with superconsciousness on the great spiritual adventure; but it is, nevertheless, at a lower level, and must have superconsciousness for its master.

During your practice period this week, read this lesson once every day. Pay close attention to any details which may seem obscure. Endeavor to think **through** them. Read slowly enough to take in the full meaning. Be sure to use your notebook freely and keep a record of any ideas which may occur to you in the course of your reading.

Your colored Keys will be an important part of your equipment. As you use them for study and meditation, they will be impregnated with the subtle vibrations of your personality. Hence they should be used by you alone—not for any selfish reason, but in order that no emanations but your own may be impressed upon them.

COLORING INSTRUCTIONS

KEY 0. THE FOOL

Yellow: Background, circles on garment (but not flame in top circle), shoes.

Green: Trefoils surrounding circles on the outer garment, and other tendril-like figures. **Not belt.** Leaves on rose, wreath round his head.

Violet: Mountains. (Do not make this tint too strong since they are distant mountains. The peaks are snow-capped, so do not paint where snow is to be.)

Brown: Eagle on wallet; precipice in foreground, where Fool stands.

White: Sun, inner garment, dog, rose, eye on flap of wallet, mountain peaks.

Flesh: Hands and face. (Since it is obvious where flesh color should be used, we shall not indicate it hereafter. There are two places where it should not be used—the hands and face of the angel on Key 6, and the human figures on Key 20.)

Blonde: The Fool's hair.

Citrine: The Fool's hose. Citrine is a yellowish-green. This is the only place where it is used.

Gold: Star on shoulder, girdle, knob on staff.

Silver: Moon on shoulder.

Red: Feather, lining on outer garment where it shows at sleeves, spokes of wheels, flame in top circle on coat, wallet (except eagle and eye.)

Keep the symbolic interpretation of each detail in mind as you color it. When your set of Keys is completed, do not permit others to handle them, or even see them. The one exception to this is that you may show your work to another student, or aspirant, if by so doing you can really help him. Even so, your Keys should be handled by no one but yourself.